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April 12, 1982

START DISCUSSION PAPER

NSC review completed

UNITS OF ACCOUNTSummary

Which elements of strategic nuclear forces should be subject to specific limitations in a START agreement? This question is called the "unit of account" issue and is of central importance in defining the basic framework of a U.S. START position. The basic unit used in SALT was strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (ballistic missile launchers plus heavy bombers). All agencies agree that this unit alone is inadequate for START and should be either supplemented or replaced. There are disagreements, however, on which approach would be most likely to lead to an agreement serving U.S. interests.

Possible candidates for limitations, which are not mutually exclusive, include the number of ballistic missile warheads, ballistic missile warhead weight, ballistic missile throw-weight, and the number of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles.

1. Ballistic Missile Warheads

Warheads are the most direct indication of strategic power. The sides are about equal in ballistic missile warheads. All agencies agree that a START treaty should provide for equal reduced levels of ballistic missile warheads, but differ as to the level of reductions we should seek.

2. Ballistic Missile Launchers

Views differ as to the desirability of constraining the number of launchers. Some believe it is important to include such limits to reduce the potential for breakout, to facilitate the verification of other constraints, and to preserve some continuity with past negotiations. Others believe such limits would hamper future U.S. flexibility, and do not, in themselves, accurately portray the capability and potential of nuclear weapons. The Soviets have a substantial lead in this category.

3. Ballistic Missile Throw-weight/Payload

Missile throw-weight is a measure of destructive capability. The Soviets have about 2 1/2 times the U.S. level of missile throw-weight. Some believe we should seek explicit equal levels, either at or somewhat above the current U.S. level.

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Others believe our purpose would be better served through an alternative approach of constraining the weight of individual warheads or the aggregate weight of all warheads in the force. Still others would seek to reduce the throw-weight asymmetry by requiring reductions in or the elimination of the Soviets' heavy ICBMs, i.e., the SS-18, plus constraints on future ICBMs.

4. Bombers

All agencies agree that it is to the U.S. advantage to seek different, looser constraints on bombers than on missiles. The U.S. has a small lead in the bombers if Soviet BACKFIRES are included, and a substantial lead in bomber weapons. All agree that BACKFIRE should be included and that we could accept equal levels of bombers. Some prefer that such limits be omitted from the U.S. opening position.

While the questions summarized above are fundamental, they should be seen in the context of a series of other issues, such as verification, duration of the treaty, cruise missiles, mobile ICBMs, and so on. It is anticipated that the initial NSC meeting will consist of a discussion of the broader problems of what we are seeking to accomplish and the general outlines of the major possibilities for limitation. This could be followed over the next month by one or two additional meetings to focus on additional issues and reach decisions.

Attached to this paper are summary outlines of possible U.S. positions to illustrate the selection of different units of account and specific levels thereof.

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UNITS OF ACCOUNT FOR START

Criteria for Selecting Units of Account

The following criteria are relevant in considering the acceptability of various units of account:

- o Military sufficiency. Any START agreement must permit the U.S. to develop and possess sufficient military capability, taking into account that allowed to the Soviet Union, to execute the U.S. national military strategy with reasonable assurance of success.

- o Equality. Nothing less than overall equality is acceptable in the provisions of any future strategic arms limitation agreement for military reasons and for political/perceptual reasons:

- o Strategic stability. A START agreement must promote strategic stability, including crisis stability, (i.e., ensuring that vulnerability does not give either side an incentive to strike first in a crisis, easing the escalation potential of crises, and limiting their scope). Reductions in the most threatening systems -- such as Soviet heavy ICBMs -- would contribute to this goal.

- o Effective verification. A START agreement must provide for necessary counting rules, collateral constraints, and cooperative measures required to achieve this objective. An agreement must ensure that in the face of Soviet concealment and deception, we could detect a violation in a fashion that would allow us the time to redress the disadvantageous results of that violation.

- o Substantial reductions on each side. Whatever unit of measurement is adopted should lend itself to substantial reductions below current levels of forces. Reductions should be to equal ceilings.

- o Easily understood by the U.S. public and Congress. To gain support and hence underscore the credibility of the U.S. negotiating position, the units of measurement selected should be explainable in clear and simple terms.

- o Alliance impact. Allied governments are concerned about the ability of the U.S. to maintain a credible deterrent, the relationship of the START approach to the INF negotiations, the likelihood that our START framework will result in an agreement, and our ability to articulate the U.S. approach to their publics.

- o Anticipated Soviet reaction. Although the Soviets will undoubtedly be suspicious of any of the reductions proposals now

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being considered, we should concern ourselves with how effectively the USSR could undermine support for the U.S. position with the U.S. and Allied publics and governments.

DiscussionA. Ballistic Missiles1. Missile Warheads

There is a general consensus that the U.S. approach to START should include limitations on the number of ballistic missile warheads. These are the most direct indicators of actual strategic power. The concept of reducing warheads is easily understood and it can be seen as providing equality between the sides in an important index of strategic power.

2. Missile Warhead Levels

There are differences of view among the agencies as to how deep the reductions in warheads should be, with the lowest level proposed being 4000 actually deployed operational warheads. A 30% cut in currently deployed U.S. missile warheads would result in about 4900 warheads; a 50% cut would bring the levels down to about 3500.

When missile warhead levels are discussed a clear distinction must be drawn between the number of warheads permitted under treaty limitations (taking into account treaty counting and type rules) and the number of warheads that would actually be deployed using operational military mission loading factors. For example, the currently deployed level of ballistic missile warheads is about 7000 for the U.S. and about 6700 for the USSR. SALT II treaty counting rules (used as an example only) would attribute to the U.S. 9400 weapons (an additional 2400) and the Soviets about 8700 weapons (or an additional 2000). Since this impact is significant, when levels are proposed or discussed with the public, it must be clear whether deployed or treaty-permitted weapons levels are being discussed.

3. Launcher Numbers

In addition to limits on warhead numbers, there could also be limits on the number of ballistic missile launchers on both sides. Launchers are the currently used measure of force size; there is the general public expectation that current levels will be reduced by START. Current levels of ICBM and SLBM launchers are about 2350 for the USSR and 1600 for the U.S. An equal ceiling on launchers, or on launchers and bombers,

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would easily be understood and seen as providing equality. In addition, such limitations would help in dealing with verification problems. Allowing the Soviets to construct unlimited numbers of new launchers could create political problems as well as allowing the base for a rapid buildup following termination of the treaty ("breakout"). Launcher limits would also provide a measure of continuity with past negotiations, which would be a positive factor as far as both the Soviets and the Allies are concerned. Limiting launchers, however, forecloses the option of enhancing strategic stability by complicating Soviet targeting through constructing a large number of additional launchers to accommodate increased numbers of smaller ICBMs. This limitation could thus restrict U.S. flexibility in the future, although it is not clear that the U.S. would pursue such a force posture in any event.

4. Missile Destructive Capability

It is generally agreed that in order to promote stability and decrease the potential for Soviet breakout or circumvention of an agreement, there should be constraints on other factors related to ballistic missiles. Such constraints could focus on missile throw-weight, warhead weight, or on specific systems.

A key question is whether seeking explicit equal limits on overall force throw-weight or warhead weight, on the one hand, or seeking reductions and other qualitative constraints on specific systems, on the other hand, is

- (1) more likely to produce the desired outcome,
- (2) more resilient in the event we do not achieve our maximum objectives.

(a) Throw-weight

Missile throw-weight (which includes the weight of the warheads, the dispensing mechanism, and penetration aids) is a measure of the destructive capability and potential of missiles. Limits on throw-weight would directly affect total missile destructive potential and, if low enough, severely constrain Soviet ICBM forces.

The purpose of an agreement limiting throw-weight would be to reduce -- and eventually eliminate -- the instability caused by the existing Soviet ICBM throw-weight advantage. Proponents believe that a direct limit on throw-weight is the most effective way to reduce the breakout potential associated with the Soviet throw-weight advantage. They also believe equal U.S.

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and USSR throw-weight levels are necessary if an agreement is to be seen as equitable. Under this approach, in the long run (e.g., in the 1990s), the Soviet missile throw-weight (currently about 5.0 million kilograms) would be reduced at least to the current U.S. level (approximately 1.8 million kilograms). This approach would require a substantial change in the current Soviet ICBM force structure, and proponents of this approach recognize that all the necessary changes could only be accomplished over a long period of time.

The arguments against using this indicator as a direct and explicit object of negotiation are: that the disparity in throw-weight can be reduced in other ways; to set the ceiling at the current U.S. level would require a substantial unilateral reduction in Soviet throw-weight; to set the ceiling above the U.S. level would result in real equality only if the U.S. built well above its anticipated requirements; that the Soviets could deflect the proposal by asking for inclusion of equivalent throw-weight of bombers -- the negotiating price thus may be too high for the U.S.

(b) Warhead Weight

An alternative way to constrain missile capability would be a ceiling on either the aggregate payload-weight (the sum of individual warhead weights) or the maximum allowable weight for individual warheads.

This constraint could be phased in over a period of years to limit the size of warheads on both sides. Thus the warhead weight limit used could be decreased over time (e.g., from 450 kilograms initially down to 200 kilograms in the long-term). Since weapon yields scale more directly with warhead weight than with throw-weight, warhead weights provide a simple and direct handle on actual missile destructive capability and provide a straightforward way to achieve and maintain equality between the sides. The disadvantages of payload limits are similar to those for throw-weight and include the current asymmetry in warhead weights (a three to one advantage for the USSR, on the average) which could lead to a negotiating outcome at a level higher than desirable. Like throw-weight, a very low warhead weight limit would require significant Soviet force restructuring over a period of time.

To inhibit the breakout potential which could arise through missiles with large throw-weight but small payload, a warhead weight constraint could be augmented with a requirement that a missile's throw-weight not exceed a certain

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multiple of its warhead weight. For example, MIRV missile throw-weight could be limited to two times the corresponding payload weight, while single re-entry vehicle missile throw-weight could be limited to 1.1 times the payload weight.

c. A System Specific Solution

This could be a mandatory, treaty-stipulated reduction in the heaviest Soviet ICBM, the SS-18 missile and its associated launchers. This approach has the advantage of being easily understood. It would reduce Soviet throw-weight by about 3 million kilograms. To be effective, a ban on SS-18s would be combined with constraints on new types of ICBMs and their launchers. While reducing the Soviet throw-weight advantage significantly, this approach avoids the problems cited above of seeking explicit limits on throw-weight. Problems with focussing directly on SS-18s are that: considerable restructuring of Soviet forces is involved; it may not be possible to eliminate the force entirely, thus continuing an asymmetry in throw-weight; the negotiating price may be too high for the U.S.

B. Bombers

All agencies agree that it is to the U.S. advantage to emphasize the distinction between first-strike ballistic missile systems and slower airborne, retaliatory systems. Since bombers are sufficiently different from ballistic missiles, we should propose that bombers not be subject to the same type of constraints as missiles and that, in particular, if there are limits on bombers, the unit of account should be the airframe.

1. Bomber Levels

If bombers are limited, they could be included in an overall aggregate of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDVs), or treated separately. For those favoring aggregate limitations on launchers, the former would be a logical way to proceed. For those who believe the asymmetry in air defenses and the basic differences in system capabilities and characteristics are critical factors, a separate limit on bombers would be the preferred approach. The U.S. could decide to negotiate equal levels of bombers, but not to offer this at the outset in order to concentrate on the missile problem.

Current levels of operational bombers are 345 for the United States (excluding 64 FB-111s) and 330 for the USSR (including 180 Backfire). Equal levels ranging between 250 and 350 have been proposed.

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2. Bomber Armaments (e.g., bombs, short-range air-to-surface missiles, and cruise missiles)

Because of the differences between bombers and missiles, because U.S. bombers face unconstrained Soviet air defense, and because of formidable difficulties in calculating equivalent payloads of bombers and ballistic missiles, all agencies agree that bomber armament generally should not be limited. One exception might be to accept a ceiling on the number of air launched cruise missiles allowed to each bomber in exchange for appropriate Soviet concessions.

Tab A - U.S. Capabilities to Monitor the START Units of Account Under Consideration.

Tab B - Units of Account Combined into Illustrative START Options.

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U.S. CAPABILITIES TO MONITOR THE START
UNITS OF LIMITATION UNDER CONSIDERATION

1. Counting Ballistic Missile Launchers: With type rules,* we can identify and count deployed SLBM and fixed ICBM launchers with high confidence. We can achieve high confidence in counting land-mobile ICBM launchers only if stringent cooperative measures can be negotiated to enhance and supplement NTM; without cooperative measures, our uncertainty could be more than 50 percent. Our most important requirements for maintaining these confidence levels are:

- Type rules to establish an association between a launcher and its missile
- In the case of land-mobile ICBMs, a high-confidence launcher count would require agreement to central basing in designated deployment areas, supplemented by some type of on-site inspection.

2. Counting Deployed Ballistic Missile Warheads: The aggregate warhead count is the sum of the products of the number of each type of deployed launcher and the number of warheads carried by the missile contained in that type of launcher.

- Our ability to identify and count deployed launchers is addressed in paragraph 1 above
- With counting rules and access to flight test telemetry, we have high confidence that we can determine the number of warheads tested on each missile type. Our most important requirement for maintaining this confidence level are:

* Type rules and counting rules are devices to facilitate verification by specifying how certain systems will be categorized for purposes of the agreement. For example, a type of counting rule might specify that all launchers of a certain type will be counted as though they contained a given missile, even though some might contain a different missile. This avoids the need to make difficult judgments, which might change over time, regarding the actual contents of every launcher in the inventory every day.

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- Assured access to flight test telemetry to determine the maximum number of warheads released and simulated on each type of missile.
- Counting rules to avoid missile-by-missile counting for missile types deployed with varying numbers of warheads.

3. Monitoring Deployed Ballistic Missile Throw-Weight: Aggregate ballistic missile throw-weight is the sum of the products of the number of each type of deployed launcher and the throw-weight of the missile contained in that type of launcher.

- With counting rules and access to flight test telemetry, we can determine the throw-weight of each type of missile within 10 to 25 percent. In this case, cooperative measures (other than agreeing on the figure of merit for each system) would do little to narrow the throw-weight uncertainty. Our most important requirements for maintaining this confidence level are:
 - Assured access to flight test telemetry to determine the throw-weight of each type of missile.
 - Counting rules to avoid missile-by-missile counting for missile types deployed with varying throw-weights.

4. Counting Deployed Heavy Bombers: The number of Soviet heavy bombers can be monitored at present with high confidence. Our most important requirements for continued high-confidence monitoring are:

- A ban on the construction of shelters large enough to hold heavy bombers at airfields with runways long enough for heavy bombers
- Assured access to flight test data to determine the capabilities of new or modified bombers
- Type rules to distinguish between bomber and other variants of the same aircraft.

5. Monitoring the Weight of Individual RVs: This monitoring task is similar to that described in paragraph 3 above

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for monitoring throw-weight. With access to flight test telemetry and reentry data, we can determine RV weights within 10-25 percent. Cooperative measures (other than agreed figures) would do little to narrow this uncertainty. Our most important requirement for maintaining this confidence level is:

- Assured access to RV telemetry and reentry radar and optical data during flight tests.

6. Other Considerations: In constructing START options, it should be borne in mind that there would be potential monitoring problems, if a START agreement did not include restrictions on new launcher construction or modification. The most worrisome potential problem would be that the Soviets would build large numbers of dual-capable launchers ostensibly for one type of missile but capable of launching another type of missile having more warheads or greater throw weight.

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ILLUSTRATIVE START OPTIONS

	OPTION A	OPTION B	OPTION C	OPTION D
SNDVs		1500		
Ballistic Missiles/ Launchers	850			
Heavy ICBMs	Only Medium ICBMs (or smaller) Allowed	Would Trade MX for SS-18s	Allowed Within RV/TW Limits	
Medium ICBMS	250	" "		
Warheads (RVs)	5000-6000	5000	7000-5000	4000
ICBM Warheads		2500	3500-2500	
Throw-weight (MKG)			2.5	
Maximum Warhead Weight (KG)				450 (larger warheads would be counted in proportion to their weight)
Bombers	Equal Levels Provided Backfire Included	250 (subceiling in SNDV aggregate)	350	250

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OPTION A

BENEFITS OF REDUCTIONS BASED ON MISSILE LAUNCHERS

The President is under considerable pressure to outline his arms control principles in the very near future. Three factors have a critical bearing on this final position.

- There is a rapidly growing movement in the U.S. to announce an immediate freeze on nuclear armaments. If a freeze which prevents U.S. modernization plans is agreed to, U.S. flexibility in arms control negotiations will be seriously jeopardized. Additionally, the Soviets are gaining considerable propaganda mileage from our apparent reluctance to talk about nuclear arms limitations.
- The DOD is considering a major revision in the analytical base upon which rest any decisions regarding the military sufficiency of proposed options. The results of this effort will provide a far more comprehensive and objective basis for military sufficiency judgments than has been possible in the past. This project is not scheduled for completion until July.
- President Reagan has promised "substantial reductions" in nuclear armaments; anything less will be very difficult for the American people to accept.

If the START approach focuses on warheads, a 50% reduction would mean a level of 3500 warheads.

- The determination that such a level allows military sufficiency is tied to the major revision of the analytical base currently in process.
- An early focus on missile warheads as a direct limit will make it difficult to resist a likely Soviet demand to focus on heavy bomber weapons rather than airframes.

Despite the problems indicated above, it is possible to structure an arms limitation approach that will have dramatic impact as a result of the extent of reductions proposed, produce reductions to equal levels, and be verifiable with a high degree of confidence (see Tab A for details). The primary focus on

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missiles would allow the President to announce a dramatic proposal to cut military armaments by 30 to 50% (e.g., equal levels of 1000 or 850 missiles).

- A specific number of warheads need not be immediately identified. In fact, it might be arrived at as the result of the negotiation process itself.
- This approach would allow the President to take immediate action and yet preserve flexibility in the negotiation process as well.

The President could also propose that both sides agree not to increase the total number of their strategic ballistic missile warheads beyond the number currently deployed.

- This would freeze the level of warheads and hopefully co-opt much of the U.S. public support for a freeze.

The elements of a proposal embodying the preceding considerations are:

- The United States will reduce the number of its strategic ballistic missiles by one half that currently deployed (i.e., to 850 - 1000).
 - Provided the Soviet Union will agree to reduce to an equal number of missiles.
- Each side would be permitted no more than 250 Medium Size ICBMs (i.e., SS-19 class).
 - All other ICBMs would be Minuteman size or smaller.
- The United States will reduce the total number of its ballistic missile warheads to 5000/6000.
 - Provided the Soviet Union will agree to reduce to the same level.
- During the negotiations, the United States will not increase the total number of its strategic ballistic missile warheads beyond the number currently deployed.
 - Provided the Soviet Union agrees to exercise the same restraint.

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- Reductions should be concluded as rapidly as possible.
 - Contingent upon Soviet agreement to an equitable reduction schedule and verifiable dismantling procedures.
- The United States is willing to agree to equal levels of intercontinental range bombers.
 - Provided the Soviet Backfire is included.

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OPTION B

BENEFITS OF LIMITS ON BALLISTIC MISSILE WARHEADS, ICBM
WARHEADS, STRATEGIC NUCLEAR DELIVERY VEHICLES AND BOMBERS

This approach would adopt as the basic units of account ballistic missile warheads and strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (ballistic missile launchers plus bombers). The number of ballistic missile warheads would be set at 5000 for each side and the launcher/bomber aggregate at 1500. These substantial reductions would focus on the most destabilizing Soviet systems by emphasizing reduction of the Soviets' largest ICBM, the SS-18, and by setting a sub-ceiling of 2500 ICBM warheads. A subceiling of 250 bombers would also be established for each side.

This approach to units of limitation would provide a flexible and easily understood negotiating framework. It would require substantial reductions in the best indicator of strategic potential -- warheads -- and in the most widely used indicator of force size -- launchers plus bombers. This approach would also greatly reduce the Soviet advantage in throw-weight, while avoiding the problems involved in seeking explicit limits on throw-weight.

This approach would provide for the U.S. a broad flexibility to structure its strategic forces to meet future contingencies. At the same time, it would concentrate on limits which we can verify with confidence and minimize Soviet opportunities for a rapid and destabilizing buildup following abrogation.

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OPTION CBENEFITS OF LIMITATION ON BALLISTIC MISSILE WAR-
HEADS, ICBM WARHEADS, THROW-WEIGHT, AND BOMBERS

A combination of limits on ballistic missile warheads and throw-weight provides the most effective overall constraint on the destructive capability of Soviet forces. The U.S. should seek reductions in ballistic missile warheads over the first five years of an agreement to a level of 7000, defined in terms of treaty counting rules, i.e., maximum numbers of tested RVs for each missile type. ICBM RVs should be limited to one-half the RV total. Deeper reductions, down to a level of perhaps 5000 ballistic missile RVs, should be sought over a 10-year period. Any final RV level should ensure U.S. ability to carry out its military objectives -- against reduced levels of Soviet forces -- and preserve a viable triad.

The U.S. START position should include a limit on aggregate ballistic missile throw-weight set at approximately one-half of current Soviet ballistic missile throw-weight. Throw-weight is the only significant measure which identifies and limits total delivery capability and which also bounds the Soviet breakout potential. Limits on launchers or on re-entry vehicle size, without some method for limiting throw-weight, would still allow the Soviets to deploy smaller warheads on their larger missiles, with the capability to add additional warheads in a breakout or treaty termination scenario. A throw-weight/RV weight ratio would require the parties to agree, in effect, to a throw-weight aggregate, but adds another element of complexity to an agreement.

Reducing Soviet RVs and throw-weight to these levels would put significant bounds on the ICBM survivability problem we now face, and would make it easier to deploy MX in a survivable mode. Although the Soviets would initially retain a throw-weight advantage, albeit at reduced levels, other benefits of the treaty, such as enhanced stability through a reduced threat to U.S. ICBMs, effective verification, and constraints on Soviet breakout would provide a counterbalance. Moreover, the U.S. should

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make clear its objective over the longer term, i.e., beyond ten years, to eliminate the throw-weight asymmetry and bring Soviet throw-weight down to the U.S. level.

Because bombers are not effective first-strike weapons and because U.S. bombers face unconstrained Soviet air defenses, bombers should be limited separately from ballistic missiles. We should seek equal ceilings on the number of heavy bombers. Bomber weapons and bomber "equivalent throw-weight" should not be limited.

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Our START approach should significantly reduce missile destructive capability, and therefore should reduce the number and destructive power of ballistic missile warheads. It should do so in a manner that can be readily understood and plausibly negotiated.

Warhead number. One key measure of destructive capability is the number of warheads. As missile accuracy improves, most targets can be destroyed by a single reliable warhead of nominal size. The total number of warheads determines the number of targets that can be destroyed. The US should press for substantial reduction in the total number of missile warheads, to an equal level of perhaps 4000 on each side, which would be roughly one-half the present numbers. Such an approach would force the Soviets to dismantle more than half of their present ICBM force. Substantial Soviet ICBM reductions are essential if we are to achieve our objectives of enhanced deterrence and stability. Reductions should be phased over five to ten years.

Destructive power. Limits on warheads alone would not be sufficient for an equitable agreement, since some warheads are substantially larger and more destructive than others. Soviet warheads are on average larger than US warheads, and if only warhead numbers were limited, there would be an incentive to increase missile and warhead size. To constrain such increases, and the corresponding breakout capability, there should be limits on warhead size.

A straightforward way to accomplish this would be to count heavy RVs in proportion to their weight. For future systems the weight threshold should be low, e.g., 200 kilograms (roughly the size of the MM-III RV). However, in the near term both sides will make use of existing systems in reduced numbers. A reasonable near-term threshold would be 450 kilograms (which would count as one unit the MM-II and the lightest existing RVs for the SS-17, 18, and 19). In order to limit breakout potential, the throw-weight of missiles could be limited to no more than twice the weight of their RVs. The essential point is that the unit of account for START should measure destructive capability of strategic forces, and should therefore constrain the number and size of warheads. Such an RV weight limit

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would force the Soviets to reduce their ICBM throwweight by half in the near term, with further reductions when current systems are replaced.

Negotiations should focus attention on reductions in missile forces, rather than on bombers and cruise missiles, which do not pose the same first strike threat, and face unconstrained defenses. In the context of Soviet agreement to substantial reductions in missile forces along the lines of the U.S. proposal, the U.S. could accept a separate limit of 250 heavy bomber aircraft.

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